

P Health **PERSPECTIVES**

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Pet Health

Is Your Pet Deficient In A Key Nutrient?

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Millions of Americans across the country rely upon their pets for comfort and companionship. Many refer to their pets as better and more reliable friends than a human could ever be. Mourning the loss of a pet is par with losing a loved family member. Research has shown us that the unconditional love of an animal can help us recover from illness and depression, lower blood pressure and extend life span. There are currently over 70 studies exploring the interrelationship between humans and animals. Our beloved pets have become an significant part of our culture. It makes good sense to insure their health and longevity through sound nutrition.

An important relationship exists between the types and amount of fats in an animals diet and its overall health and development. Of particular importance are the dietary fats classified as essential. Essential nutrients are nutrients that must be supplied in diet as food or supplements but cannot be manufactured by the body. There are two essential fatty acids: linolenic (an Omega-3

fatty acid), and linoleic (an Omega-6 fatty acid). The essential fatty acids are found most abundantly in unrefined polyunsaturated vegetable oils. Essential fatty acids are important in the diet of humans and animals as they serve as powerful protection against degenerative disease and illness. Thousands of studies



have been conducted on the therapeutic and preventative properties of these key nutrients, including treatment and protection against cancer, arthritis, auto-immune, kidney and cardiovascular disease.

In the wild herbivorous animals obtain the two essential fatty acids in plant foods that they eat. Essential fatty acids are primary components of cells and are readily incorporated in the tissues of these animals. As the food chain would have it, carnivorous animals obtain these important nutrients by eating the essential fatty acid rich tissues of their prey.

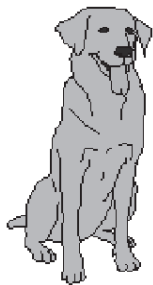
Not only are the essential fatty acids important, but the ratio in which the Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids are supplied in the diet is equally important. The ratio of essential fatty acids found in the diets of non-domestic animals equals about 75% as Omega-6 fatty acids, and 25% as Omega-3 fatty acids, about a 4 to 1 ratio. Interestingly these animals do not suffer from the advanced degenerative diseases becoming common to domestic animals. The Omega-3 and 6 fatty acids interrelate and compete to create a delicate balance in the body that when in harmony composes a chorus of vibrant health. When either fatty acid is deficient or supplied out of proportion to the other the delicate balance is thrown off, setting up an environment of degenerative and ill health.

Unfortunately, modern manufacturing of pet and animal foods has caused an over abundance of Omega-6 fatty acids, at the expense of the Omega-3 fatty acids in these sources. Oils rich in Omega-3 fatty acids are purposely avoided by animal food manufacturers because,

unless protected from light, heat and oxygen, they may go rancid, lessening the shelf life and palatability of their product. This has resulted in a gross deficiency of these vital nutrients in these foods and ultimately in our pets.

Just how important are the Omega-3's to the health and development of animals? Studies on rats and rhesus monkeys showed that dietary restriction of Omega-3 fatty acids during pregnancy and lactation interferes with normal visual function and may impair learning ability in offspring, and make the brain more susceptible to environmental toxins and alcohol. Many of these abnormalities appear to be irreversible. During pregnancy the forebrain, retina and liver show preference toward Omega-3 fatty acids while the Omega-6 fatty acids decrease during development underscoring the interrelationship between the two. Essential fatty acids are converted in the mother and passed through the umbilicus to the fetus or in breast milk to the infant serving to develop the brain, nervous tissue and retina of the eye.

Flaxseed oil may be emerging as an antidote to the widespread problem of lack of Omega-3 fatty acids in humans and animals. Flaxseed is unique amongst vegetable oils as it contains a whopping 55% Omega-3 fatty acids as linolenic acid. A groundswell of nutrition conscious veterinarians are beginning to recommend to their clients that they supplement their animals diet with a daily dose of flaxseed oil, poured right over the food.



The vets are finding remarkable results in clearing up skin conditions, relieving arthritic and inflammatory pain, as well as improved over all pet health. Mr. Paul Stitt, while addressing a scientific conference in North Dakota reported that flax increased bone strength as well as improved the silkiness and sheen of animals fur. When the diets of horses were

fortified with flax, within three weeks their coats developed a beautiful sheen, and dandruff was greatly diminished. Within 9 months cracked hooves were completely healed. When a pregnant mare was fed flax, her offspring were larger, and grew faster than when previous to being fed flax. Further research indicates that horses fed flax and injected with the deadly organism *Escherichia coli* were better protected than those not fed flax, suggesting enhanced immunity in these animals. Select Alaskan sled dog mushers are fortifying their dogs diets with flax oil as it serves as a source of valuable energy, keeps less desirable saturated fats mobile in the blood stream, increases oxygen uptake to the cell, decreases recovery time from strenuous exercise, and prevents and heals worn and chaffed paws. Numerous studies conducted on animals and humans show that flax has powerful anti-tumor properties and may reduce tumor size by 50%.

Veterinarian Dr. Collett of Sylmar California suggests supplementing an animals diet with about 1 teaspoon of flax oil per every 25 pounds of body weight. This recommendation will serve to

adequately supply the valuable Omega-3 fatty acids while balancing the Omega-6 fatty acids supplied in the animal food.

Supplementing the diet with Omega-3 rich flaxseed oil may insure a longer, healthier, happier and more productive life for you and your pet.

Flaxseed for human and animal consumption can be found at finer health food stores, veterinary offices and select pet food stores.

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